



HOUSE DEMOCRATIC OFFICE

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DEMOCRATIC LAWMAKERS OFFER PLAN TO IMPROVE CLASS SIZE LEGISLATION

House Republicans Refuse The Better Approach
GOP Strategy Risks Ruining Voters' 2002 Mandate To Ease Crowded Classrooms

TALLAHASSEE, FL --- Florida House Democrats presented in committee today a reasonable alternative to Republican class-size reduction legislation in hopes of not halting Florida's progress at easing overcrowding in Florida's public school classrooms.

An amendment offered in the House Education Policy Committee by Representative Martin Kiar (D-Davie) and supported by other House Democrats would require the state to complete the last—and most crucial---step toward phasing in the Class Size amendment in 2010.

Kiar's proposal also would do what the House Republican plan fails to achieve by giving needed flexibility to school districts to contend with unexpected student growth that occurs after a school year begins.

"We want to offer school district officials needed flexibility to contend with the challenges of meeting the Class Size Amendment that voters approved in 2002 and which are responsible for significant student learning gains," said Representative Kiar, the House Democratic Ranking Member on education issues. "The Democratic approach also ensures that we continue our investment and progress in reducing class sizes."

The Florida Constitution requires the state to provide funding to ensure that by the fall of 2010 no class exceeds a maximum of 18 students in kindergarten through 3rd grade; 22 students in 4th through 8th grade; and 25 students in 9th through 12th grade.

The Class Size Amendment has forced the Legislature to spend money on schools at a higher level that it otherwise would have under Republican leadership. In the past six years, more than \$16 billion has gone toward implementing the reductions.

House Joint Resolution 919 by Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) weakens the classroom caps by allowing schools to satisfy the requirement by meeting a school-wide average, rather than having to hit the mandate in each classroom.

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